

Prof. B. Ramamurthi

President, Neurological Society of India, 1958

K. RAJASEKHARAN NAIR

I saw Prof. B. Ramamurthi initially some time in 1971 when he came to address one of the meetings of Delhi Neuro Club. Almost all neurologists and neurosurgeons of Delhi like Prof' Baldev Singh, Dr. S. N. Pathak, Dr. P. N. Tandon, Dr. A. K. Banerjee, Dr. Vimla Virmani. Dr. S. S' Pant (a full time private neurologist practising in Delhi during those days) and others were present there. I was the junior most of the lot in that group. Prof. B. Ramamurthi was introduced by Dr. P. N. Tandon almost deifying him. Prof. B. R. M. was perfectly dressed and appeared like a dignified gentleman. The topic was something mundane.

All the juniors assembled there had some trepidation how he would be delivering his lecture in front of such great neuroscientists like Dr. Baldev Singh, Dr. Tandon and others. Honestly I did not know at that time that he was far more qualified and senior to any one else present there. The first row of the audience was for the senior colleagues' I was sitting in the last row.

The moment he was ushered in onwards we could see that he had a magnetic charm and great authenticity. I could even see the annoyance of some of my colleagues in Delhi when Prof. P. N. Tandon showered on him the praising words as welcome. When he got up to address he looked at the first row where all the senior neuroscientists of Delhi were sitting. He started his talk simply thus "Well, What I am going to say about this topic is not for the first row of people here. Probably they know it as much as I know or pretend that they know a lot more of about it' They cannot be taught any way. But if I teach the last man in this audience well, he will be receptive, thankful and benefited by my talk. Perhaps some day he will do something very useful about it which will be beneficial to the science. So my talk is for him". As luck would have it, his eyes fell on me and I thought that the next one hour of his talk was selectively for me. I was so much impressed by his command of language, delivery of his speech and the analytical way he argued his points.

I coaxed Dr. Vimla Virmani a few months later into granting me permission to work with BRM for a short time during my annual leave. She made the necessary arrangements and got the OK from BRM so that I could spend 3 weeks with him during my summer holidays of 4 weeks. By some clerical error, the day from which I was supposed to work with him happened to be a Sunday. I like punctuality and as suggested by Dr. Virmani, I entered the Institute of Neurology at 7.20 AM" on that Sunday, 10 minutes ahead of time. Since I did not see any doctor there, I climbed up the stairs to see the spotlessly clean, well kept wards. Then I saw a ramrod straight thin man climbing the stairs ahead of me, eyeing me periodically. He was wearing a half sleeves shirt and trousers. He asked me briskly "Who are you? Why are you here?"

I told him that I was Dr. Nair from AIIMS and came to see Dr. B. Ramamurthi. His answer was again brisk. "Oh, you are Rajasekharan Nair. You are late. You were supposed to be here at 7.30 AM. Bit irritatingly I told him that it was not yet 7.30 AM and would he kindly direct me to Prof. BRM's room. He looked at his watch and grudgingly agreed that it was only 7.30 AM then and he was BRM. I felt taken aback to address BRM himself. But smilingly he took me to his ward rounds when Dr. Velmurugendran and others joined him. Since that day I admire him for his meticulous way of getting things done punctually, properly and with great decorum.

The Wednesday morning clinical meeting was a lesson for me for throughout my life. The meeting started exactly at 7.30 AM. with almost everyone seated in his places. BRM started the proceedings precisely at 7.30 AM. A minute or two later the entry door at the back of the room was quietly opened by some one to enter. BRM's comment was curt and firm "Jagan, You are late. Please close the door and go". Only later I came to know that the person who came late was none other than the Professor of Neurology, Dr. K. Jagannathan. During my short stay there BRM liked me as I was not afraid of answering questions or making comments when asked during the clinical meetings or ward rounds. My stay was cut short quickly as the head of the Dept of Neurology at AIIMS came to know about my sojourn to Madras without her explicit orders. But by that time I had developed great friendship with a lot of people there, particularly Prof. G. Arjundas and Dr. Velmurugendran. During that time Dr. Katiyar of Banares Hindu University was also there as an

exchange student. Dr. Sathyanarayana (Sathy later became Professor of Neurology at Vizag) was my contemporary DM student in Madras.

In fact in later life I was accepted almost like an Institute of Neurology man myself-Thanks to my friends there. I became an Ekalavya (the disciple who learned from a Guru without his knowledge) to BRM. Fortunately for me the Guru did not ask anything as the Dakshina.

When I asked for the autobiographical write up to the past Presidents of NSI, the first person who encouraged me was BRM himself. With the keen sense of history (last year he wrote to Indian Academy of Neurology and the Neurological Society of India that he was ready to provide space and finances to preserve our archives of the development of neurosciences in India) he knew the relevance of the work. I am indeed happy that he sent me different relevant chapters of his autobiography from which I have quoted the following excerpts. I thank him profusely. I do not think that but for Jacob Chandy, B. Ramamurthi and P. N. Tandon neurosurgery would not have got this much of recognition in India. Probably medical neurology did not have a chance during their heyday as they were so much dominating the scene.

Excerpts from the autobiography of Padmabhushan Brigadier (Hony) Prof. B. Ramamurthi. DSc, MS, FRCS(E), FACS, FICS, FAMS, FASc, FNAC, FNA.

Date of birth : 30 th Jan 1922.
Father : Capt:T. S. Balasubramonian MBBS,
Medical Practitioner, Trichinopoly, Tamil Nadu.
Mother : Mrs. Balambal.
Renowned Sanskrit scholar and mathematician.
Wife : Dr. Mrs India Ramanturthi, MD, FRCOG.

How I chose up a speciality.

One fine morning in Oct. 1946, Dr. N. S. Narasimha Iyer (surgeon) walked into the ward and asked me which speciality would I liked to be trained in. I was amazed as I had still some months to appear for the MS surgery examination..... The chief showed us an advertisement that had appeared in the Hindu that morning inviting applications for the speciality training in medical subjects.

In 1946 an interim Govt. had been formed in Delhi with Jawaharlal Nehru as the Interim Prime Minister. This Govt. decided that the new independent India would require many experts and they should be selected and sent abroad for training..... I suggested that I may apply for Thoracic Surgery. In his characteristic intonation the chief replied "No I don't think so. It is better that you apply for Neurosurgery. Looking at the amazement in my face, the chief replied ".... It is better that you apply for Neurosurgery. No wonder you are surprised. This is a new speciality unknown to India yet. This has to be developed....". That is how my saga in neurosurgery started all due to the academic and practical sagacity of Prof. NSN. I sent in the application in March 1947 just before the MS examination and the announcement appeared that the interview to select candidates for training in the specialities will be held in Simla in April 1947.

You are too young to be selected.

All the bigwigs in Medicine of yesteryear formed the selection committee and this included Drs.Khanolker, Lakshmanaswamy Mudaliyar, Director of Health Services and some IMS officers.....

This was my first visit to Simla and I enjoyed every minute of it.Young and bold I could answer all the questions of the interview board.' At the end the board members remarked: " you have done well but are too young to be selected". I knew that this would be coming and was well prepared for it. I pointed out to the Board that when the famous John Hopkins Hospital was started almost all Professors were all below the ages of 35 years only one Professor being 42 years old.....Two surgeons ten years older to me were selected. Ram Ginde from Bombay and Omar Jooma from Karachi. Ginde went to Montreal ... and Jooma to Oxford. Ginde returned to Bombay in 1952 to set up a neurosurgical

centre in KEM Hospital. He turned out into a brilliant neurosurgeon but really could not build up a school due to his difficult personality. Jooma returned to Karachi and by then Pakistan was formed. He was the first neurosurgeon in that country. He was a good neurosurgeon and a jovial friend. But Jooma did not do much to develop the speciality in Pakistan and it took almost two decades more for neurosurgery to grow in Pakistan.

I returned from Simla quite sure that I would not be selected but learnt that there were schemes for the Govt. of Madras for training specialists in medicine for the State. I applied to the Govt of Madras for training in Neurosurgery..... My performance and qualifications were helpful as by then I had also acquired my FRCS Edin. I am sure being the son in law of Mrs. Rukmini Lakshmi pathy (who became the Health Minister in 1946 in Andhra Pradesh) must have played a part indirectly though she certainly would not recommend me or ask for any undue favors.

(His initial attempt to get trained by Mr. Norman Dott did not materialize as Dott wanted a 4 year training for BRM).... Later I wrote to the Commonwealth Relations office and the postgraduate Training Board in the UK. After a few weeks the suggestion came that I should be trained in Manchester with Prof. Geoffrey Jefferson for a period of 18 months. This was found agreeable to the Govt. of Madras and....I set sail to UK by the end of Nov 1948.

At New Castle Neurosurgical Unit

My initial neurosurgical training was planned under Sir Geoffrey Jefferson at Manchester. One of the greatest figures in British Neurosurgery, Prof. Jefferson combined great surgical expertise and philosophy....When I contacted the Professor he observed that he had already too many war returned candidates under training and it might be wise for me to go to New Castle to work with Prof. Rowbotham who was heading the largest neurosurgical and Head Injury Units in UK. Mr. Rowbotham had only one assistant and thus my opportunities to learn neurosurgery would be much better at New Castle.

The New Castle Neurosurgical Unit had then 80 beds, 60 of which were in Ward 3 and 4 and 20 were in the New building, Ward No 27 .The operation theatre was at the far end of the long corridor....and it was

solely for neurosurgery and was situated in a building constructed as a War time bomb shelter. In addition to Mr. Rowbotham, there were only 3 more people (Mr. Norman Whalley, assistant to the Chief and two house surgeons Dr. Miss June Dickson and Dr. Ralph Wright) to run the entire unit. *(The first day was memorable)....* The Chief noticed me abruptly and said: "Hey you are the new comer, Ramamurthi". I said "Yes Sir".He continued : "I shall call you Rama. Have you used an Ophthalmoscope?" I had never done so. Nobody in Madras Medical College had stressed the importance of using the ophthalmoscope. I could not let my Medical School or myself down and said "Yes Sir". He asked me to go and examine the fundus of a patient in another bed. With great trepidation I took the ophthalmoscope and remembering the lessons I learnt in the fourth year MBBS, examined the fundus. Luckily the pupils were dilated and I could see the optic discs fairly clearly. I reported back to the chief that the fundi were normal. Half an hour later he left the Ward and I continued seeing the fundi of every patient in the Ward, quite pleased with the initial success I had in the first day.....After the first few weeks of familiarizing myself, I was asked to proceed to the operation theatre to scrub. The list showed 3 laminectomies and one craniotomy for the day. I had seen laminectomies in Dr. Narasimha Iyer's unit and it usually took 5 or 6 hours for one operation to be done.... It was a surprise for me to see that within 3 hours two laminectomies were over. We had lunch in the side room of the operation theatre. Those days it was mostly boiled potato, cabbage and fish. Being a vegetarian, my choice was restricted to only potato and cabbage. This could not last long and I started eating fish. Between the lunch time and evening a laminectomy and craniotomy were also over. By the time I emerged out of the theatre it was half past five in the evening and it was quite dark. There had been days when I had not seen day light in New Castle for two or three days in succession....

Surgery at Sunderland.

Every Wednesday Mr. Rowbotham used to visit the Sunderland General Hospital and see patients and perform operations. He took me with him frequently to assist him. One Wednesday the operation for a root section for

Trigeminal neuralgia had been planned and the Chief sent me earlier to Sunderland with Dr. Mrs Katleen Bell, our competent chief anesthetist. Mrs. Bell told me to start the surgery and added that the

Chief would be joining me shortly. After proceeding for some time, I enquired whether the chief had come but was told by Bell that he would come at any moment and I should get on with the job. This was the first trigeminal root section I was doing. With great trepidation I coagulated the meningeal artery and exposed the nerve root. Still the Chief did not turn up. and I was again asked to go on. Some how I finished the surgery... I told Mrs Bell that it was most surprising that Chief did not come. She agreed and suggested that we should have some coffee. At the side room, I saw the Chief sitting as large as life and found out that he had been there for the past one and a half hours. He had instructed Mrs Bell that I should perform the operation without knowing about the Chief's presence and that if any problem arose the Chief would walk in to help me. That was the way the Chief created confidence and what a co-conspirator he had in Mrs. Bell.

(Prof Rowbotham used to visit St. Luke's hospital at Middleborough where he used to do prefrontal leucotomies. As early as in 1946 B. N. Balakrishna Rao used to perform leucotomies in Bangalore on patients selected by Dr M. V. Govindaswarui.

BRM used to visit Middleborough every week and perform 2 or 3 leucotomies. Though this surgery fell in disrepute, it would certainly help more than 2/3 rd patients carefully selected.)

International Congress of Neurology in Paris.

In Sept 1949 Mr. Rowbotham suggested that I should accompany him to Paris to attend the International Congress of Neurology which was being held after the Second World War. *(It was a great occasion to meet the great neurosurgeons and neurologists from the World over).*

Visit to European Centres.

In April Mr. Rowbotham suggested that I should visit some neurosurgical centres in Europe.... *(BRM met Prof Hugo Kravenbuhl in Zurich, Dr Edward Busch in Copenhagen., Prof. Olivecrona in Stockholm and Dr. Lindgren in Karolinska Institute)....*

Back to Britain.

On 29th June 1950, I was informed by Dr. W. R. Handerson, Hon. Assistant Secretary of the Society of the British Neurological Association that I had been elected a corresponding member of the society and that I was welcome to all its meetings. I was very pleased that this was done on the recommendation of Mr. Rowbotham'

To Montreal Neurological Institute.

(On recommendation of Mr Rowbotham BRM left for Montreal Neurological Institute and had training under Prof. Penfield, Dr. Herbert Jasper in EEG, Prof Wittiaru Cone and Prof. Theodore Rassmussen the neurosurgeons and Dr. K. A. C. Elloit, the neurochemist....

Prof. Penfield suggested to BRM that he should visit the centres in Canada and IJSA also and hence he visited Dr William Meckenzie, Dr Charlie Drake, Dr. Peyton in Minneapolis, Dr William Mckraig and Dr Adson in Mayo Clinic, Rochester, Dr Robert Hemberger in Indianapolis and Dr Earl Walker at John Hopkins Hospital at Baltimore, Dr Lawrence Pool and Dr John Scarf in New York.

In July BRM returned to UK to be with Dr Indira while she took her MRCOG exam successfully.

On return to India BRM visited Prof Igor Klatzo, Oscar and Cecile Vogts in Germany).

One had to be in the laboratory of Oliver Vo-et all day long. But the long autumn evening and weekends were free for Indira and myself to roam about the Black Forest and walk as far as Titisee. The time spent was so delightful that my son Ravi was born 10 months later'

Back in India.

... While I was abroad, the Madras Public Health Services Commission had already interviewed many candidates ... and published a list of selected Assistant Surgeons. The MPSC again interviewed and was about to publish a second list.... On my representation about my merit and experience I was placed between the two lists. By then Dr. Jacob Chandy had already started Dept of Neurosurgery at Vellore a few months earlier.

I got orders of appointment as an Assistant Surgeon in Madras Medical Service and joined on the Mjayadasami day-Z4th Oct 1950" The Dean was Dr. R. V. Rajam. Professor of Surgery was Col. Sangham

Lal and the Registrar of surgery was Capt Muniswamy.....Prof. R. V. Rajam was an inspiring figure, straddling the medical horizon as an intellectual giant. ...He became a rare combination of a surgeon and a physician, acquiring his MS in Surgery from Madras University in 1930 and MRCP from Edinburgh in 1931 . Further he specialized in the subject of Venereology... Prof. Rajam became a hero model.... Dr. R. V. Rajam, the great physician, teacher and humanitarian died on 29th Oct 1992 just a few weeks before his 100th birthday.

... Col. Sangham Lal was magnanimous enough to allot four beds of his own in the Denison Ward for neurosurgery and allowed neurosurgical operations to be done on his operation days after he finished his list..... Often Col. Lal used to walk into the theatre and watch the surgery. On a few occasions he also assisted me wanting to know what it was all about. He encouraged me to present papers at the clinical meeting. ... He helped in getting me the post of lecturer in neurosurgery which made me independent of the Professor of Surgery.

The initial days of Neurosurgery in Madras.

....The facilities in Madras to start a neurosurgery unit was non existent. The suction that was used in the theatre was a crude manual one with a huge metal nozzle to suck out peritoneal fluid during abdominal surgery. Some how Dr. Muniswamy found out the existence of an old DC motor in the stores of the surgical register and brought it down to connect it to the suction pump which in turn could be connected via rubber tubing to the glass nozzle that was used in neurosurgery for suction. The old motor whenever it was switched on used to create a loud noise and vibration and everybody in the hospital knew when a neurosurgical operation was going on.....

... As there was no EEG in the General Hospital at that time Dr. S.T. Narasimhan kindly agreed to do the EEG on some of the poor patients referred by me from General Hospital.... He was 37 years old but only an LMP when he joined the Dept. With determination he finished the condensed MBBS course and got his MBBS degree. He was appointed an honorary Professor of EEG only a few months before his death in 1959.

... In those days there was a Tamil film "Ayirum Thalai Vangiya Apoorva Chintamani"-" The wonderful Chintamani who took away thousand heads". Following this mythical figure Jacob chandy in those days was known as 'Ayirum Thai Vangiya Apoorva Chandy. The wonderful Chandy who had taken away thousand heads. I do not know what epithet was attached to me. Somehow I escaped such nomenclature. I had heard B. Ramamurthi meant Burrhole Ramamurthi, as every patient who came to the neurosurgical ward had his head shaved and a hole made in the skull. This would illustrate the atmosphere of fear and apprehension that prevailed among the public and the profession in those days and early neurosurgeons had to fight this and improve their results.

.... It is in this backdrop I remember the services of Dr. Mahadevan Pillai. The arrival of Dr. K. M. Pillai ... was a Godsend for me and for the progress of neurosurgery in Madras. Dr. Pillai was a superb radiologist willing to take in new ideas. He had already experience with cerebral angiography and when he joined in Bernard Institute of Radiology and I was able to start regular angiography.... Later... we started percutaneous vertebral angiogram reaching the artery in the neck behind the carotid,

in the back of head over the arch of atlas or through subclavian puncture.... This was in 1952 two years after I started neurosurgery in Madras....

.... The technique of anesthesia adopted in neurosurgery in those days was crude and risky that now one wonders at the boldness with which we operated under such adverse conditions.... It was induced by ether, intubation was done in a blind manner and the anesthesia maintained by Nitrous oxide..... while getting trained in UK I had seen the anesthetists inducing anesthesia with IV Pentothal. But I was not able to convince the anesthetists in Madras in 1950 that this method should be adopted. one can very well imagine the effect of ether intubation and the coughing induced by intubation on the airway on the already raised intracranial pressure. The dura was extremely tense and a special trick of opening the dura very quickly had to be adopted to prevent the brain from oozing out like tooth paste. The only method available to reduce intracranial tension was rectal administration of concentrated Magnesium Sulphate and IV hypertonic glucose.

... Dr. Kabir and Dr. Rajagopal were my classmates and they helped me quite a lot in this matter. Dr. Rajagopal ... was sent to Britain for further training in anesthesia and in 1952 when he returned he introduced the modern techniques of anesthesia in Madras.

Development of Stereotaxy in Madras.

.... One fine evening in 1960, I had a call from Raj Bhavan,Hyderabad, with the ADC informing me that the Governor-General Shrinagesh wanted me to visit him in Hyderabad.... When I reached there,dinner was served first.... General Nagesh didn't talk about his illness during the dinner.

After dinner the Governor told me that he was having Parkinsonism (which was of course obvious to me when I met him first) and had been operated in London an year ago by Mr. Lawrence Walsh of Atkinson Morley Hospital and he had done well. He was developing some signs on the opposite side and as he had heard of my work, wondered whether he could get the operation done in India by me. I replied that I would be delighted but the problem was that though I knew the technique, I would not be able to help as none of the required equipments were available in India. The next question was whether it would be good idea if all the equipments were brought the and experts spent a few days in India teaching the techniques to Indian neurosurgeons. I jumped at the idea and requested the Governor to do his best to see this done. To my amazement he lifted the telephone on his side and asked for a connection to the Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru at Delhi. This was about 11 PM. The PM came on the line and the General explained the problem to him and requested his approval for such a project under the Commonwealth Aids Scheme. The PM gave his consent and a beaming Governor told me that everything would be arranged in a short time. All agreed to do it in a few minutes... This was how the British team happened to come to Madras where stereotaxy already had a start....

.... The visit of the team from Britain to Madras to offer surgical treatment for Parkinsonism was widely advertised and there were many referrals from all over the country and from Ceylon. The team arrived from Delhi.... Prof. Lawrence (Ticky) Walsh had brought with him a senior nurse to assist him during surgery....

.... The three weeks went off very well. During that period I and Dr. V. Balasubramonium did many operations by ourselves. About 20 neurosurgeons also attended this Workshop and some of them operated and learned the technique. Dr. Sanat Bhagawathi was already a trainee with Mckissok and walsh and he also helped in the workshop. At the end of the training period when more than 40 operations had been performed, the team left the instruments with us including the frame, the thermometer, the lesion making apparatus etc.

From then on stereotactic surgery became an important part of our work' our department became world famous for the variety of operations we were doing. The neurologists, Drs. Arjundas and Jagannathan were also keenly interested in the neurophysiological aspects and were most helpful. Drs. Balasubramonium, and Kalyanaraman became experts and our team presented many papers in International conferences.I became the vice-President of the International Stereotactic Society....

VBS specialized in treatment for aggressive disorders and built up an impressive series of about 600 cases. Dr. Kanaka did a lot of work on spasticity and Dr. Kalyanaraman in epilepsy. They were the heyday of the Institute of Neurology when every month there were three or more foreign guests"

Neurological Society of India.

As early as in 1951, Jacob Chandy suggested the formation of a neurological Society of India. This was approved at the first meeting held at the residence of Dr. S. T. Narasimhan, at Madras, though Jacob chandy insisted that this was to be finalized in my house over cups of coffee provided by Indira. Jacob chandy was elected the president and S. T. Narasimhan, the Treasurer. I was the secretary and Baldev Singh a member. A small beginning indeed.! Dr. chandy proposed that only people who were practising full time neurosciences should be made full members and others only as associate members. This got me worried as full time neuroscientists in fifties were very few. But-chandy was adamant and later he was proved to be right. As Secretary, I went about recruiting as many associate members as possible.

The first conference was at Hyderabad in 1952 and the inaugural address was given by sir A. Lakshmanaswamy Mudaliyar. The conference was held along with the annual conference of the Association of Physicians of India. This helped us to create interest in neurology among the general physicians and the pediatricians. But the full members were very few and the society was derisively known as the Chandy Ramamurthi Society for some years. Drs. T. K. Ghosh, Ram Guinde, Eddie Barucha, Menino D'Souza, N. H. Wadia and others became members later on. One of the early members was Wilhelm Grillmayr, MD Vienna who was a neuropsychiatrist who worked in Poona and Colombo. The journal Neurology India was started in 1952 and I was the editor for some years, followed by' Ram Guinde and later by Anil Desai who took the burden for many years.

The annual conferences were held along with the Association of Physicians of India till 1961, by which time the NSI had grown. The first independent conference was held in Bombay in 1961 at Mathurji Grah, opposite the Bombay Hospital. Since then the NSI has grown in strength....

The NSI is a composite body and has all neuroscientists as members. During the last decade grumbling was heard from neurologists that they were not well represented. I do not know how this feeling arose as the Conferences are so arranged that all neurological papers are included and presented. Tire Presidentship also went by rotation. Unfortunately one year A. K. Banerjee made a tactical blunder and became the President out of turn.....

Still this was a wrong step and got the neurologists fuming. The trouble is that the neurologists being dreamers and thinkers are unable to run the organization properly whereas the neurosurgeons are doers, get a lot of things done. This is not the fault of either group but dissatisfaction was present. Many neurologists wanted to become Presidents, a natural ambition, but the chance in NSI comes only once in three years, whereas if they form a separate Academy of Neurology they can have a President among themselves every year'. Hence a group of them suddenly decided to form the Academy of Neurology and there was an ongoing debate about the role of NSI. The NSI stuck to its guns that it is an all representative body and if some neurologists would like to form an academy they could do so, but the NSI will continue as before. Now there are two separate conferences and I have a feeling that the NSI is still very popular with neurologists. The younger neurosurgeons want to ... form a neurosurgical society. I feel that this will be a disadvantage for the neurosurgeons as I do not want them cut off from the main stream of neurology.

All India Institute of Medical Sciences.

... From early 1950 onwards there was serious talk among seniors in the medical profession and the Govt of India about the creation of a Medical Institute of excellence in the country.... There was a consensus that the Safardarjung Hospital could be taken over along with all the area around for this purpose... But there were two women fighting. Rajkumary Amrit Kaur was the Health Minister with the Govt. of India and Sushila Nayyar had control of the Delhi city. There were rivalries and jealousies and Sushila Nayyar refused to hand over the Safardarjung Hospital area to start AIIMS. Rajkumary Amrit Kaur went ahead and got the land opposite to the Safadarjung Hospital for the Institute... Col. Sangham Lal took over as the surgeon and Dr. K. N. Wig as physician. There was a long way to -go.

In the mean time the Govt of India advertised for the posts of senior professors for the specialities of Orthopedic surgery, Plastic Surgery, Neurosurgery etc. The pay was around Rs. 1300/- with accommodation provided. ... The interview was held at Delhi and I was selected and offered the post. Dr. P. K. Doraiswami was selected the Professor of Orthopedics and Balakrishnan as the Professor of Plastic Surgery.

In the mean time, Prof. Wider Penfield visited India as a guest of the Govt of India and I was at Delhi to meet him and Mrs. Penfield.... He was shown the proposed site of AIIMS. Later he visited Madras and Vellore. He spent 5 days in each place After Prof. Penfield visited my Dept in GH and seen my work, I asked him to advise me whether I should move to Delhi. He pondered for a while and replied a firm No "You have already built up a department here with great effort and are doing plenty of work everyday and you have a lot of good will. In Delhi it will take at least five years more for facilities to be made available and for you to start work. Those five years of your youthful life will be wasted and hence it is best you continue here". That decided it and I did not take up the post of Professor of Neurosurgery at AIIMS in 1956. The offer was repeated in 1959 and again I declined. Later in 1961 Prakash Narain Tandon of Lucknow took up the job and responsibility of creating neurosurgery in Northern India.

In the long run would Delhi have been better?

... The nagging doubt arises on seeing the present sad state of Neurological sciences in Madras.... Tandon and Varma had created Institutes which are still continuing strong and doing excellent work. If I had joined Delhi in 1956, perhaps Neurosurgery there would have flowered earlier and would have been the result of my effort....

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Retirement

After studying and working in the same Institution from 1938- 1978, a rare achievement for anybody in Government service, it was a wrench indeed to retire from the Madras Medical College and Institute of Neurology which

was at the peak of its glory. I knew that MGR (Sri.M. G. Ramachandran, Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu) would not give me any extension as he felt that I was a friend of Sri. Karunanidhi.... Still hopes and desire are not easily vanquished and I wrote an appeal to extend my services which of course was a waste of time and energy....

As my birth day was on 30th Jan I had to hand over charge on 1st Feb 1978. The students and Professors arranged a farewell meeting as I was the Principal of the Madras Medical College...'

New life at Voluntary Health Services.

During Jan 1978, I met Dr. K. S. Sanjivi and he welcomed me cordially to come and work in VHS and start a neurosurgery department. This was kind and generous of him....

The VHS was started by the vision and determination of one man Dr. K. S. Sanjivi.... The corner stone of the first block of buildings was laid in June 1961 by Sri. Jawaharlal Nehru. The Medical Centre was fully equipped and staffed before July 1963. Indira was the Treasurer of VHS for almost 15 years since 1965. Arogya Ashrama Samithi donated a sum of Rs. Three Lakhs to VHS to build the Dr. A. Lakshmi pathi Block and to start an Ayurvedic Research Unit

Due to the encouragement and the generosity of Dr. Indira Ramamurthi, I got a donation of Rs. Eight lakhs towards building the Dr. A. Lakshmi pathi Neurosurgical Centre. The new surgical block with the Neurosurgery ward and four new operation theatres came into being.....

The opening of the new surgery and radiology block was a great leap forwards and I could create the Dr. A. Lakshmi pathi Neurosurgical Centre. I also applied to the National Board of Examinations for recognizing the centre for training postgraduates for Dip. NBE examination. It was then my son Dr. Ravi Ramamurthi who passed his MCh examination and FRCS Sur-eical Neurology joined VHS